

February 24, 2022

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Molly Murphy, Brian Stryker

Re: Taking the Win over COVID-19

After two years that necessitated lockdowns, travel bans, school closures, mask mandates, and nearly a million deaths, nearly every American finally has the tools to protect themselves from this virus. It's time for Democrats to take credit for ending the COVID crisis phase of the COVID war, point to important victories like vaccine distribution and providing economic stability to Americans, and fully enter the rebuilding phase that comes after any war.

Below we lay out some strategic thoughts for Democrats positioning themselves on COVID-19 after nearly two years of the pandemic:

- **Declare the crisis phase of COVID over and push for feeling and acting more normal.** Thanks to Democrats, we are nowhere near where we were two years, or even one year ago. Democrats have a tremendous opportunity to claim an incredible, historic success – they vaccinated hundreds of millions of people, prevented the economy from going into freefall, kept small businesses from going under, and got people back to work safely. Because of President Biden and Democrats, we CAN safely return to life feeling much more normal – and they should claim that proudly.
- **Recognize that people are “worn out” and feeling real harm from the years-long restrictions and take their side.** Most Americans have personally moved out of crisis mode. Twice as many voters are now more concerned about COVID's effect on the economy (49%) than about someone in their family or someone they know becoming infected with the coronavirus (24%). [Two-thirds of parents](#) and [80% of teachers](#) say the pandemic caused learning loss, and voters are overwhelmingly more worried about learning loss than kids getting COVID. Six in ten Americans describe themselves as “[worn out](#)” by the pandemic. The more we talk about the threat of COVID and onerously restrict people's lives because of it, the more we turn them against us and show them we're out of touch with their daily realities.

- **Acknowledge COVID still exists and likely will for a long time.** We are not advising that Democrats talk like the Republicans that have largely ignored the pandemic, even pre-vaccine. Declaring a return to the “new normalcy” does not mean ignoring that people will continue to get it, that we shouldn’t be responsible, or that we should turn our backs on the medical community that is treating those sick and developing the therapeutics that will save lives. Instead, it means recognizing that the threat of COVID is no longer what it was even a year ago and therefore should not be treated as such – shutdowns, masks, and lockdowns were meant to save lives when there was not yet a vaccine that could do that. Voters know we now have the tools in the toolkit to be responsible in combatting and living with COVID – vaccines and boosters to minimize illness, and masks and social distancing around vulnerable groups.
- **Don’t set “COVID zero” as the victory condition.** Americans also don’t think victory is COVID Zero. They think the virus is here to stay, and 83% say the [pandemic will be over](#) when it’s a mild illness like the flu rather than COVID being completely gone, and [55%](#) prefer that COVID should be treated as an endemic disease. And that’s what most Americans are dealing with—a disease with fatality rates like the flu—because most of us took the personal responsibility to protect ourselves and our families by getting vaccinated. Americans also assume they will get COVID: 77% agree that “it is inevitable that most people in the US will eventually get COVID-19”, and 61% of Americans who have never tested positive think they are likely to be infected over the next year. And thanks to the work Democrats have done over the past year, despite believing contracting COVID is inevitable, most Americans are no longer fearful.
- **Stop talking about restrictions and the unknown future ahead.** If we focus on how bad things still are and how much worse they could get, we set Democrats up as failures unable to navigate us through this. When 99% of Americans can get vaccinated, we cause more harm than we prevent with voters by going into our third year talking about restrictions. And, if Democrats continue to hold a posture that prioritizes COVID precautions over learning how to live in a world where COVID exists, but does not dominate, they risk paying dearly for it in November.